

# SOCIAL ACTION



MOLBROOK LIBRARY  
PACIFIC SCHOOL  
OF RELIGION

AMERICANS  
WANT TO READ

By

DOROTHEA F. HYLE

# SOCIAL ACTION

(A MAGAZINE OF FACT)

Published by the Council for Social Action of the  
Congregational Christian Churches

289 Fourth Avenue

New York City

November 15, 1942

NOBLE S. ELDERKIN, *Chairman*

DWIGHT J. BRADLEY, *Director*

ELIZABETH G. WHITING, *Associate Director and Editor*

---

## CONTENTS

SOME WORDS ABOUT K.T., <i>by Dwight J. Bradley</i> . . . . .	3
WE WANT AMERICANS TO READ, <i>by Katharine Terrill</i> . . . . .	5
AMERICANS WANT TO READ, <i>by Dorothea F. Hyle</i> . . . . .	7
Libraries, An Essential Service . . . . .	7
A Brief History of America's Libraries . . . . .	15
How a Library Operates . . . . .	18
Libraries in Hospitals and Prisons . . . . .	26
Inequalities in Library Opportunities . . . . .	27
Looking Toward the Future . . . . .	34
THE AWAKENING OF WEST ARCADY, <i>by Dwight J. Bradley</i> . . . . .	36

---

Dorothea Frances Hyle is Chief of the Circulation Department and Director of Publicity for the Kansas City Public Library.

---

**SOCIAL ACTION, Volume VIII, Number 9, November 15, 1942.**  
Published monthly except July and August. Subscription \$1.00 per year; Canada, \$1.20 per year. Single copies, 15c. each; 2 to 9 copies, 10c. each; 10 to 49 copies, 8c. each; 50 or more copies, 6c. each. Re-entered as second-class matter January 30, 1939, at the Post Office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

## SOME WORDS ABOUT K.T.

She would not care too much for a merely personal tribute, for she is too amazingly objective to put undue store in things that concern only herself. But the temptation is great to be a bit personal now that she has laid down her work for us after so many vivid years. So let it be said, if only for this once, that few people in this generation have seen so clearly the issues of our times and, with such unflagging devotion, have given themselves to the mastering of what Walt Whitman calls "these strangling problems." Her service to the world through her denomination spanned almost two decades. Before that, she served in a no less strategic place as the librarian in a vital mid-Western community.

She feels the power of the spoken and written word. Her life has been bound up with books. She knows what an explosive center in any community the Public Library may be. She could tell us that each stack-room is a storehouse of spiritual T.N.T. And she is well versed in getting this dynamite into places where it can shake and shatter illusions.

Yet, she is so gentle, so deeply humane and sympathetic, as to be totally disarming. This, one remembers, has always been true of those whose outlook is both compassionate and just.

Henry Wallace has paid tribute to "the millions in all nations who have freedom in their souls." K.T. is one of these, but beyond all except a handful of them she has kept unbroken faith in the common man and in his future.

So she helps us all to keep faith with ourselves.

—DWIGHT J. BRADLEY



Katharine Terrill  
“K.T.”

*Blackstone Studios, New York*

## WE WANT AMERICANS TO READ

In publishing "Americans Want to Read" the Council for Social Action has again scored a triumph. I am proud to be chosen to write its foreword, because I came to the Department of Social Relations, and later to the Council, with a background of eighteen years of public library experience. I early found that the men and women in the Congregational Christian fellowship depend upon and value highly the services public libraries can render. Miss Hyle's presentation will help many in our churches, I hope, to work to secure for others the benefits which they now enjoy and have come to take for granted.

Americans want to read! Americans need to read if they are to understand their world today; they need to read in order to fit themselves for their work and their community responsibilities. In large urban centers with newsstands on every hand, with well stocked bookstores, with cheap reprints available in drugstores, with easy access to the public library and its branches, the response of the average person is—"There is too much to read. What I need in my busy life is, time to read."

But for a vast number of Americans, there are no newsstands, no bookstores, no twenty-five cent reprints at the corner drug-store and, worst of all, no free public library service. And do not forget that where fewest reading opportunities exist, other cultural resources are most meagre. Contrast Massachusetts and Mississippi. Massachusetts with its high standard of library service and the easy access to other cultural opportunities—music, art and institutions of higher learning; Mississippi with a few libraries and inadequate schools. Yet the children in Mississippi are as eager to learn and understand the world, given the opportunity, as are children in Springfield or Newton, Massachusetts.

We speak with pride of the fine Children's Departments in such great public libraries as Cleveland, Detroit and St. Louis,

to name a few, but we also need to remember the millions of children outside the pale. Miss Hyle tells about the regional library service and what such service can do in rural communities and small towns. The value and necessity for Regional Library Service can hardly be overemphasized. Henry Wallace in his famous speech, *The Century of the Common Man*, declared "Men and women cannot be really free until they have plenty to eat, time and ability to read and think and talk things over." All of us, I hope, agree with Mr. Wallace. Many of us would add: "and books must be free and easily available to every one through a public library service."

More than a million people, 52 per cent of the population in Iowa, Mr. Wallace's home state, are without library service. I do not have the figures for the Dakotas, Nebraska and other Middle Western states, but I fear they are not much more encouraging. A bill calling for regional libraries and supported by farm organizations, women's clubs and the State Library Association was defeated recently in the Iowa State Legislature. The bill asked for an appropriation of \$250,000, only a dime per year per person, the price of one Sunday newspaper.

Regional Library Service boils down to the hard question of taxes. In Iowa and other states we cannot expect librarians and library board members alone to carry forward the campaign for books for all the people. All across the country our ministers and laymen serve on public library boards. Our church women through their reading lists work closely with librarians in spreading the influence of good books. We can and must take to heart the suggestions offered on page 34 and by working with other people and organizations do our part to bring these plans to realization. Another way to help immediately is to see that *Americans Want to Read* gets the widest possible distribution.

—KATHARINE TERRILL

Panora, Iowa  
October 12, 1942

# AMERICANS WANT TO READ

BY DOROTHEA F. HYLE

## LIBRARIES, AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE

At a time when Europe is burning its records of the centuries, and dictators are attempting to falsify the pages of history, the libraries of America stand as monuments to the spirit of freedom. Perhaps the greatest compliment ever received by our libraries is contained in the editorial, "The Menace of the American Public Library," appearing in *Geist der Zeit*, published in Berlin in October of 1941.

*"Public libraries are a powerful weapon in the forging of public opinion. It depends to a great extent on their policy which path the American people will take in the present world conflict."*

We have chosen our path and no one can measure the part which libraries and books have played in our decision or the importance of their role in the creation and maintenance of democratic morale in wartime.

President Roosevelt, in a message addressed to the Fourth General Session of the American Library Association, indicated that he understands the *mission* of libraries and his words are a refreshing antidote to those which consider their influence a *menace*.

"In your charge is the living record of all that man has accomplished in the long labor of liberty, all he aspires to make of it in the future we of the United Nations fight to secure. By keeping that record always before the eyes of the American people you give them renewed strength in their struggle against the dark backwash of tyranny, renewed faith in their unconquerable determination to take their full part in establishing on this earth a new free age of man."

If this new free age is to be established Americans must understand the issues for which we struggle and the sacrifices involved in building a world in which peace must be just if it is



*Kansas City Star*

You can interrupt the improving of a road and ten years later go on with it about where you left off, but if you interrupt decent care for children and ten years later begin again to feel responsible for them, you can by no means begin where you left off. You find them irreparably grown up, and grown up wrong—enemies and liabilities of their community rather than friends and assets.

—Dorothy Canfield Fisher

to be enduring. Any medium which strives to foster a growth of thought and opinion in this direction is one whose power must be appreciated and increased. The most potent medium is that of the printed word, for radio memories and newspaper headlines fade quickly while impressions from books remain, if the author is worthy of his craft. Public libraries, the agencies which disseminate knowledge through the printed word, must be increased in number and their services enlarged and improved wherever they exist. These things must be done, even now while we are at war, as a part of the war effort.

This war is a world-wide revolution—an interim between one form of culture and another, the shape of which we dimly see. Through the protection of our homes, our communities and our best traditions, we can preserve all that the past has taught us. The library, properly administered, is a beacon light to guide the footsteps of a bewildered people by cherishing for them the records of those ideals for the preservation of which they are at war. However, the library is not only the repository for the ideas which in the past have been so powerful; it is also a vital factor in the dissemination of the ideas of thinkers of our own day. Where public libraries exist, 26 million men and women, boys and girls are using them each year to seek of their own free will the books which, as one British statesman has expressed it, "are the means whereby civilization may be carried triumphantly forward." If, as H. G. Wells has prophesied, "Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe," what we are doing about education, and what our schools and libraries are doing, are matters of vital concern to the nation.

The library's part in the war effort should be clear to all thinking people. At no time in the history of public library service in the United States have our libraries and library services been so essential as they are today. Their opportunities are many and include the promotion of adult education programs, work with foreign born, participation in civilian defense efforts throughout the United States and the encouragement of demo-

cratic principles and high ideals. This war is, in a very real sense, a struggle to keep open the doors of churches, schools and libraries. Libraries, in offering their services to the community in war time, are fighting for their own survival.

### *Lessons Learned in the Last Decade*

Most librarians realize the importance of the struggle in which they are engaged and the last decade, with its unemployment and poverty, has taught readers and librarians alike lessons of value to us all as we enter the deeper crisis of the war years.

During the depression, men and women by the thousands thronged to their public libraries. Circulation figures soared. Men with tattered coat sleeves and drooping shoulders carried home books, later to return to the library with a new lift and hope reborn. Thousands of unemployed men and women took advantage of their enforced leisure to brush up on their trades or to study at home to better fit themselves for the jobs which they felt were bound to open up some day.

Young people just out of high school throughout the United States turned to the library for vocational guidance, while millions of mystery stories and novels were read for relaxation. Books took on a new and deeper significance for the people of many American communities. Amusements were costly, but the public library's books were free.

As jobs opened up again, and fewer leisure hours were available, men and women continued to visit the library. However, individuals who formerly took six books at a time began taking only one or two. The library is being used, but people are tending towards the reading of more solid literature. They come to the library because they have a specialized need for the library's services.

### *Public Libraries in War Time*

The circulation figures of many libraries indicate that the reading of fiction has shown the largest decrease in the last year. Although less fiction is being read, there is always a de-

mand for the recreation and the beauty which is found in poetry and in really well-written novels. In a time of crisis and anxiety, such literature has a place, and an important place, to fill in a person's reading interests.

Momentous events, however, are fostering a keen interest in more serious reading and are the subject of many a family's breakfast table discussion. At no other time in history have hitherto little known areas of the earth's surface been brought so forcefully into focus as they are today. Faraway places which to many people were merely spots on the maps of forgotten school geographies, are now in the news limelight. What is the result? People everywhere have become curious about these areas and have gone into their public libraries to find out more about them.

This is a machine war. Therefore, there is an amazing increase in the number of men and women working on inventions, hoping thus to speed up war production. Rationing has come into effect and the consequent demand for substitutes has promoted scientific investigations in these fields. Experiments are progressing rapidly in the discovery and production of synthetic materials. Technical books are in demand as never before.

The Army, the Navy and the Marines need officers. Thousands of young men are being trained for leadership. Training of any kind, of course, necessitates study and the use of books.

Skilled workers in defense industries must study to keep abreast of new developments and to find the means to produce material not only more rapidly, but more efficiently. Classes are formed for foreman management, for personnel work and for the training of skilled workmen. Again, books are needed.

Leaders are turning to public libraries all over the United States asking for reading programs to facilitate all these studies.

### *Public Libraries an Aid to Civilian Defense*

Volunteers in civilian defense are faced with an entirely new experience. The people of England learned in a remarkably short time to build up a powerful home line of defense. Now

people in the United States have had to take this step. Every city of any size boasts its office of civilian defense. First aid classes sprang up over night. Civilian defense efforts have had a veritable mushroom growth. What of the public library's place in this new set-up?

Many libraries have become war information centers. There is no other course open to a people suddenly faced with a situation entirely foreign to their knowledge and experience than to acquire this knowledge as speedily as possible. What better source of information could be found than the books and pamphlets written by people who have themselves learned either by bitter experience or from the records of the experiences of others? In some communities the librarian has set up special shelves and arranged window displays in cooperation with the local Defense Council. No other agency can hope to compete with public libraries in the free dissemination of printed material in time of crisis, since libraries have been doing just this during all of the years of their development. This is their reason for being, in time of peace or war.

The housewife who turns to the library for new books on nutrition and foods so that she may send her men-folks out to their defense jobs and her children to school well nourished and physically fit, is only one person to whom the library fulfills its obligations to its community today. The defense worker who comes into the library for new technical books on his trade, and thus learns to better fit himself to work for Uncle Sam and the future, is another.

The men and women who read the headlines and then flock to the library for books explaining them, are proving that they are democratic citizens. They recognize their right to be told why we are fighting, what we must undertake before we can have a just and durable peace, and why there is a danger of inflation, even what inflation is. Given good, substantial reasons why they must conserve sugar, fuel, tires and other rationed products, the public will cheerfully accept these restrictions. Providing material which explains to people the facts behind

today's newspaper front, is another way in which the library is fulfilling its obligation to its community. The New York City Public Library is but one example of the way in which our libraries are serving their communities and their country today. In this, the largest city in the United States, the library has extended until eight in the evening its reading hours in the departments of scientific, technological and current periodicals.

The public library, while adapting itself to the needs of its community in war time, must continue to provide the tools for the enrichment of its cultural life—so essential to civilian morale. It is no wonder that the record of registered borrowers shows a steady upward curve today. More and more Americans want to read.

### *Government Recognizes the Importance of Libraries*

The government itself has recognized the value of libraries. Government documents are now issued in greater numbers than ever before. New, attractive, informative and inexpensive material is being sent to libraries everywhere in the United States, so that the people may realize that this is their government, and share intelligently in the fulfillment of their obligations as citizens. By studying these government pamphlets, the farmers in the community will raise better crops and healthier cattle. The housewife learns how to can and preserve foods, the first aid worker what to do in an emergency, and every citizen is provided with information on such important questions as the measures to be taken against drought, the over-cultivation of land, the spread of epidemics and for the control of floods.

The government also recognized the value of libraries when it built camp libraries for the Armed Forces, and employed trained librarians to administer them. The Victory Book Campaign, sponsored by the American Library Association, the American Red Cross and the United Service Organizations, to acquire ten million books for the Armed Forces, was a powerful demonstration of our desire to provide books for leisure hours and recreation, books for study and books to build morale

for the men in the service of their country. The books collected through the Victory Book Campaign will enrich the lives of these men and, furthermore, will provide a backlog for the libraries of the armed forces for years to come.

Navy libraries have increased to a thousand or more, afloat and ashore. Geographically, they cover the whole world—wherever a huge battleship goes, wherever a lonely outpost listens at a jungle's edge, our men are provided with books and magazines.

The army has been equally alert and, in towns near army posts, the public libraries are welcoming soldiers as patrons. Imagination and energy are providing service men with a variety of good reading. A woman in Illinois, for example, invented a "knapsack" book, made by stapling a complete serial



A.L.A.

Army, Navy and Marine Service Club Library, Indianapolis

story together in a standard manila cover. Over a thousand of these knapsack books, light and easily carried, have been distributed to boys leaving for over-seas duty. As each book is different, it is hoped that the soldiers will read and exchange them with each other. This is but one of many ways in which church people and all good citizens can give pleasure and relieve loneliness in places where we cannot go in person.

Today we are all caught up in the greatest struggle of all time. But we must not lose our perspective or allow essential institutions to suffer. Fortunately the war is only one thread in the historical pattern of library service. It is an important one, however, and the library's actions at this time would seem to foreshadow their role tomorrow.

Immediately after the war, there will arise other tremendously important tasks. When that day comes, libraries will continue to function to assist their communities in finding the answers to these problems of reconstruction. They will adapt themselves as well, as they have done throughout their history, to the frequently changing needs of their communities. Only as they do this can they hope for general recognition and adequate support.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF AMERICA'S LIBRARIES

Americans consider libraries their birthright. Early in the seventeenth century, university libraries were gaining a feeble beginning. Books were beyond the pocketbooks of most colonists, and reading was far from being a universal accomplishment. It was another 150 years before libraries as they are known today came into existence. For their present development two famous men, Benjamin Franklin and Andrew Carnegie, will always be held in grateful remembrance in the United States. Benjamin Franklin was responsible for the beginnings of a subscription library system, and Andrew Carnegie encouraged the development of libraries and library buildings, mainly through the Carnegie Foundation, which he established.

In 1800 the Library of Congress was founded by an act of

Congress providing for the establishment of a library of the two houses, under a joint committee, at an initial cost of \$5,000. Today it is the largest library in the United States and contains more than 5 million books.\* An important part of these is a vast collection of photostats of historical documents on America gathered from foreign archives.\*\* Here too can be seen the original copy of the Declaration of Independence.

The formation of the American Library Association in 1876 was another powerful factor in the history of library development in the United States. Soon after this, young people's needs began to be recognized and, early in the twentieth century, school libraries began the rapid evolution which is one of the amazing features of recent library progress in this country.

With the growth of the library movement in the New World, changes in the attitude of librarians have taken place which have had a bearing not only upon library development, but upon librarianship as a profession. Libraries formerly were storehouses of rare books, precious treasures which were to be safeguarded not only for the ages but from usage by readers. Chaining books to the shelves was a common practice in European university libraries, but has never been followed in the United States.

The United States borrowed from the Old World the idea of collecting and preserving treasured writings in libraries. In return, we gave to the Old World a new idea—the library supported by public funds for direct public benefit.†

Today, library service is measured in terms of general usefulness. There are, however, famous libraries in the United States which treasure rare books of great value. Among them are such libraries as the John Crerar Library in Chicago, the Huntington

---

\*Other great modern libraries are the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris; the British Museum, London; the Bodleian, Oxford, England; the Publichnaye Biblioteka, Leningrad, U.S.S.R.; and the Preussische Staatsbibliothek, Berlin. The oldest existing public library in Europe is the Vatican Library formed in 1295.

\*\*Nora E. Beust, "Professional Library Service," Bulletin 1937, no. 23, p. 7. U.S. Dept. of Interior, Office of Education.

†*Building America*, Vol. VII, No. 5, p. 133.

Library in San Marino, California and the Folger Library in Washington. These are not public libraries in the true sense of the word, but rather reference libraries chiefly for the use of scholars. The rare books they contain could not stand frequent handling and exposure. They must be guarded carefully since they comprise some of our now invaluable collections, and the American public may be justly proud of them.

Many university and college libraries also have valuable collections which are not resorted to except by scholars and graduate students. This care is necessary because many of these books are now out of print and could not be replaced. However, the invention and the use of microfilm has done much to make these books accessible to the general public. Many of the rare books in European libraries have been microfilmed by students and are now preserved in libraries in this country.

The public library movement with a free circulation of printed materials has spread all over the United States, and there have been many ramifications in the network of the existing system. Obtaining a foothold in rich urban communities, the desire for public libraries has reached to the far-flung hamlets of the country, into out-lying farm areas and small communities.

Many successful efforts in starting or developing public libraries originated, not with librarians, but with small groups of women who, working in either church groups or clubs, have accomplished wonders in acquiring book collections, and interesting city fathers to support a public library. These hard-working women, motivated solely by the desire to see their communities and their children enjoy adequate educational advantages, cannot receive too much credit.

Unless the people of a community want a library, librarians have learned that it is useless to bring library service to them. That they are eager for it when they realize what it can mean to them has been proved by experience. Recently, the government, through the Works Progress Administration and in co-operation with state library commissions, has done much to

carry on this pioneering work in sections hitherto without library service. Where these library "demonstrations" have taken place, many communities have voted the tax necessary to maintain them. Thus, in a very short time, the government has been able to do, through its financial backing, what struggling library commissions and individual effort had not been able to accomplish. Many state associations now have the support of state appropriations, and national leaders, outside as well as within the library profession, are urging federal aid for libraries in communities too poor to carry locally the entire cost of this essential service.

## HOW A LIBRARY OPERATES

There is infinite variety in American public libraries. Some of them are housed in vast edifices, some in picturesque buildings in the center of a town and others in one room over a village drug store. It is impossible to describe them all, or to itemize their perfection or inadequacies. A bird's-eye view of a metropolitan system may help us to understand the services rendered in some communities and the potential value of an adequate library to an area where none exists.

A metropolitan library is a social agency fully integrated with the entire civic program of its community. Men and women from all walks of life have learned to appreciate and to avail themselves of its services. The housewife knows that her children will enjoy the children's story hour, while she takes pleasure in choosing new cookbooks or a novel to read in her precious leisure minutes. The business man avails himself of the extensive business services. The executive calls the reference department on the telephone for the answer to a single question which may save his company thousands of dollars. Young students and research workers use the library in preparation for examinations and theses. The professional man finds new material to keep him abreast of recent discoveries in his field. The scientist and inventor frequent the library for refer-

ence assistance. The salesman, the public speaker, the grocery clerk working to obtain a degree, the young club woman, all are a part of the constantly increasing stream of people who go in and out of the doors of public libraries each day.

### ***Censorship***

One of the most important problems in library administration is that of censorship. The war has imposed certain essential restrictions, but a library in a democracy is bound by fundamental principles to maintain a clear course between two vastly differing paths of opinion. We may not agree with another person's opinion, but we are bound to respect it. The same is true of authors and books. We may not agree with the principles to which an author adheres in his book, but, if they are not falsified, if they represent his honest and well-founded opinions, the library and the librarian, desiring to maintain a democratic institution, are bound to respect them and to give them to their public.

Today most trustees have very wisely left such decisions to the librarian whom they have appointed to administer the library. They know that he is in this position because he has had years of training and experience which qualify him to make wise choices. Library trustees who take their office seriously feel that they must represent the whole community, with its cross section of American thought and opinion.

### ***A Library's Budget***

In order to meet its obligation to the people of a community, a library must have an adequate budget. The securing of support commensurate with the community's needs and ability to pay is not alone the librarian's responsibility. It rests on the shoulders of library trustees and of every public-spirited member of the community which the library serves. Because of the importance of this aspect of library administration and because of the inequality of wealth in various parts of the United States, this problem is discussed at greater length in a special chapter.

The individual's interest in and support of his local library is one measuring rod of his usefulness as a citizen. This responsibility must not be pushed into the discard in time of war.

### *The Role of the Librarian*

The librarian is an important public servant. He, or she, must have a broad general education and an understanding of human nature as well as of community problems. Moreover, the special skills of the profession include the ability to administer a budget wisely, to make discriminating choices in the purchase of books and to establish a cooperative relationship between the library and the public it is established to serve.

Contemporary history is like an erupting volcano, changing and shaping the fate of many nations and of public opinion all over the world. Most librarians in America have kept abreast of this inexorable force. They must be ready to answer questions about subjects as diverse as the carbohydrate content in a quart of milk and the early history of the Ottoman Empire. Statistics gathered from readers' advisers and from information and reference departments prove this to be true. The record of registered borrowers also shows an upward curve indicating that people are finding the answers to their developing curiosity in the pages of books made available to them through the courtesy and knowledge of their librarians.

Moreover, the good librarian no longer is satisfied to sit behind his desk waiting for the public to come to him. He recognizes the need for publicizing, through every possible channel, the services available to every citizen.

Because librarianship requires such a high degree of specialized training, the last fifty years have seen the rapid growth of schools of library science attached, in most instances, to universities. Library study is graduate work because most library schools now require an A.B. or B.S. degree, as a prerequisite to the technical courses included in their curricula. Many librarians have gone even farther and have undertaken a sixth year of university work, emerging with a Master's degree in library science.

and, in one or two universities, courses leading to a Ph.D. degree in library science are being offered.

During the war, the librarian, as in Great Britain, will be called upon to render many additional services to his community. At the same time, the decrease in the number of assistants provided by the N.Y.A. and W.P.A., the tremendous demand for workers in war industries and the rapid absorption of much trained personnel into the armed forces will add to the burden of regular work carried by those at home. Here is another field in which conscientious citizens can safeguard essential services by working on a plan to provide some volunteer assistance to the regular library staff.

### ***Library Departments***

The peak of library service is attained in large public libraries in metropolitan areas. Here there is a wide range of types of service, some highly departmentalized, while others which lack funds for expansion nevertheless carry on as a part of the library's centralized activities. Such a library is a great collection and distribution center for the preservation, ordering and circulation of all kinds of material.

Reference rooms hum with activity from the hour of opening until they close at the end of the day. Libraries in many cities have information desks to facilitate the patron's use of the library. Reading consultants assist borrowers in finding their books and help them to make wise selections. Periodicals and newspapers are handled in a separate department.

"Behind the scenes" in a large library there are many other departments. In the Accessions Department new books are ordered, received and added to the library's collection. In the Catalog Room, all books are classified as to subject matter and catalogued so that they may find their way to shelves containing similar books.

### ***Branch Libraries***

The growth of branch libraries in large cities has attempted to parallel the rapid increase in population. The dream of a

library service equally accessible to all neighborhoods motivated the development of large public library systems. The housewife and the businessman, the school girl and the college professor are coming to take the library as a matter of course and to regard its development with personal pleasure and civic pride. Whole families often visit the library at the same time, browsing about, finding what they want and then taking out books for each member. As part of the program of community service, each branch librarian makes a special effort to reach families that have recently settled in the neighborhood.

### ***Cooperation with Schools***

The public library is, or should be, completely integrated with the city's educational system. No high school can be accredited without containing a well-equipped library, supervised by a staff of professionally trained librarians. Many grade schools, also, now have libraries and classroom collections, giving even to the smallest children an opportunity for daily contact with books. This familiarity with books not only assists children and young people in their school work, but also helps to instill in them the habit of using books both in their work and as a source of pleasure. Public libraries often provide children with excellent supplementary reading material, and are used constantly in the preparation of home work and for the consultation of reference books and reference service.

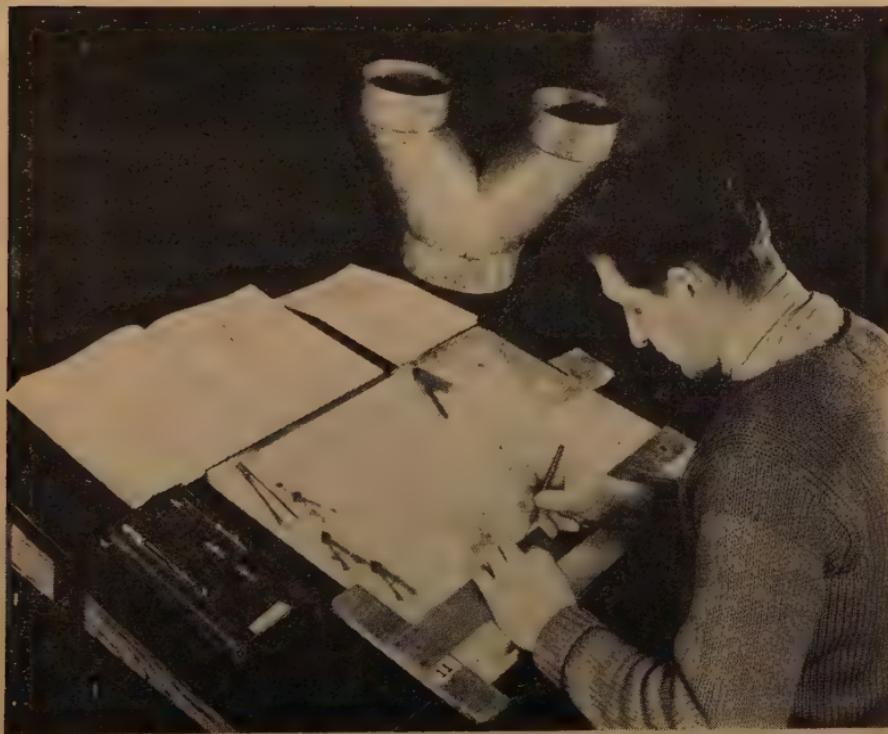
### ***Readers' Advisory Service***

The public library has rightfully been called a "people's university." In order to encourage intelligent reading most large libraries now have an especially trained member of the staff, called a Readers' Adviser. Her work with the library patron is a highly individualized and confidential service. She is appealed to for help in formulating a reading program, in building up the reader's background for a variety of purposes; for recreation, for study, for educational assistance, for work along scientific or highly specialized lines of endeavor, for employment and

personnel work or for a study of foreign languages. The club woman, the speaker, the musician, and others from many different avenues of life benefit from her knowledge. This kind of advice differs from the regular circulation book selection service in that it is highly individualized and involves, as a rule, the keeping of a reader's record of progress. It takes the place of formal school work, and supplies the offices of a trained tutor. One of the most important developments in good library service, it does more than bring readers in contact with books. A readers' adviser tries to suit the special book to the particular reader's needs.

### ***Adult Education***

The history of adult education has been closely integrated



A.L.A.

**Industrial Training Needs Books**

with the work of public libraries. No longer are libraries thought of as educational agencies for young people alone. Now they offer educational advantages and a means for continuous study to adults of all ages and all school levels. Public libraries try to correlate and supplement the adult education programs connected with museums, art institutes, courses in music appreciation, the radio, etc. Many libraries have instituted their own public forums, encouraging free discussion groups and, oftentimes, sponsoring noted speakers for these assemblies. In many cases the librarian acts as the discussion leader. Libraries cooperate with women's clubs and parent-teacher associations, with the small but energetic dramatic club and with both business and labor groups. Churches make a frequent call upon the services of the librarian in the preparation of reading programs, in radio work, in round table discussion groups and as a speaker for church groups.

### ***Work with the Foreign Born***

In cities where a large proportion of the population is foreign born, library work with new citizens has become an integral part of regular library service. The library has always been a most democratic institution in that its doors and its services are open and available to people of all races and creeds. In this way, it practices the ideals of true democracy and demonstrates them to the community.

Americanization work is carried on by libraries, and books on beginners' English are in constant use. Branches of the city library are often located in settlement houses or community centers. Evening classes for men and women who work during the day are held in some libraries in order to encourage the preparation and education for citizenship.

### ***Work with Mothers***

Some libraries have a "Mothers' Room." Many hundreds of babies owe their strong bodies to the books their parents borrowed from the library before they were born. In many libraries,

the Mothers' Room or Parent-Training shelf gives special help on prenatal care for the mother, on infant feeding and on child psychology and behavior problems. More than one mother has profited greatly by reading books on "Feeding our Children," or on "Applying Nursery School Methods in the Home."

### *Work with Children and Young People*

The development of work with children has been an accomplishment in which Americans may well take pride. Many public libraries today have departments devoted entirely to work with children who, in some instances, represent a third of the library's patrons. Children's librarians receive a specialized training in this field. Children's rooms are completely equipped to meet the needs of children, even to small chairs and tables and benches placed in front of the shelves of "easy" books.

Only within the last fifty years have libraries made any provision for young readers. One hundred years ago, many libraries did not even admit boys and girls. Today, no one can be prouder than a child with his first library card! Children enjoy reading projects, their story hours and their summer reading programs. Boys and girls are taught "the library habit" when they enter school. Books form a background for their studies and an unlimited reservoir of joy for their leisure time. They advance from the "easy" books, through the grades, to the high school libraries, and then on to college and university libraries.

In an effort to span the gap for high school graduates, from school library to adult library participation, many libraries have instituted departments known as "Young People's Departments," or have staff members especially equipped for this work, or have set aside special shelves of "Books for Young Moderns."

### *Books for the Blind*

Reading for the blind is handled in public libraries just as is any other collection of books. Since books for the blind may be mailed free of postage, the use of inter-library loans makes avail-

able to them volumes containing much of our finest literature.

Library work with the blind was begun in St. Louis in 1924. Later, on June 6th, 1938, the St. Louis Public Library opened as its twentieth branch, the Henry L. Wolfner Memorial Library for the Blind. With a bookstock of 26,826 embossed volumes and 1,472 containers of Talking Book records, it is one of the most outstanding libraries of this sort in the country.

## LIBRARIES IN HOSPITALS AND PRISONS

There is great satisfaction and extraordinary human interest in the work of hospital libraries, where contacts between the patrons and the librarian are particularly intimate. One of the most appealing of such services is the library work in children's hospitals.

The administrators of prison libraries also have unusual op-



Federal Reformatory Library, Chillicothe, Ohio

A.L.A.

portunities for personal work with suffering humanity. In fact, in these two comparable fields of service the healing of minds and bodies offers a challenge to the librarian who enters either of them. All members of organized society face the problem of the rehabilitation of prisoners. Encouragement and approbation are strong incentives to constructive effort on the prisoner's part. Here, the church can work hand in hand with the librarian, the one without, the other within prison walls, to instill in the prisoner a social consciousness, and to give him an opportunity for self adjustment once he regains his freedom.

Moreover, the number and quality of the books in hospital and prison libraries is a problem in which we may all be concerned. As the war progresses, army and navy hospitals, especially, will need the generous contributions of all those who can remember what good reading means during days or months of illness.

## INEQUALITIES IN LIBRARY OPPORTUNITIES

Although there are approximately 6500 public libraries and thousands of university, college, school, and special libraries (the last serving businessmen, museum staffs, patients in hospitals, and men in camp or on shipboard) there are still millions of people in the United States who have no access to them. It is difficult to believe that there are actually thousands of little children living in our southern and middle-western rural areas who have never even seen a picture book!

### *Rural America Wants to Read*

The records of our extension librarians contain the accounts of many a heartache and untold hunger for books which are not available. Isolated communities are too poor for such luxuries as even a meager supply of free books. Children in these sections are forever barred from sharing the accepted privilege of millions of other children, unless state and federal aid in these areas becomes an actuality. But, because bookstores are

non-existent, there is no way for them to buy even twenty-five cent Pocketbooks, paper bound, if they had the money.

The parents of many of these children are farmers from whose toil must come the crops which nourish the people of America. They are denied the aid of good books on farming mainly because they have never known of their existence, when from these same books and pamphlets might come the information which would turn a poor crop into a good one. Agriculture has assumed a vastly important position in the war set-up. There is no way to estimate the possible returns on an investment in dollars and cents gathered from a simple mill tax for state aid to rural libraries.

The tragedy lies in the fact that these poorer counties have



Visit of the Library at Parkman, the Minneapolis hospital  
for chronics

A.L.A.

the greatest percentage of children in their population, whereas, the counties with adequate library facilities have a larger percentage of taxable adults. Where cultural resources abound, there also libraries and bookstores flourish.

In vast areas untouched by state or county libraries thousands of children are growing up unaware of the very principles upon which a democracy exists. The last few decades have witnessed the shifting of large migratory groups of rural people into cities where they must meet conditions about which they have absolutely no knowledge and with which, therefore, they have no ability to cope. This may result in dissatisfaction, subversive tendencies and possibly in crime. Here is fertile ground for the sowing of un-American ideas. This inequality of opportunity is an indictment of American democracy and a condition which can be altered under the pressure of enlightened public opinion. When Europe is burning its libraries, then is the time for us to begin to work to bring books to all America. As one rural editor has said, "War time is book time."

The accompanying set of figures furnished by the American Library Association shows the discrepancies in Library service. Whereas the minimum tax for library service suggested by the American Library Association is one dollar per capita, the only state to exceed this amount in the figures for 1937-38 was the District of Columbia, which jumped from \$.75 in 1934 to \$1.30 in 1938. The average for all states in 1938 was \$.42.

	1941	Per Cent	1938	Per Cent
With library service	96,221,760	73	80,596,235	65.7
Without library service	35,447,515	27	42,178,811	34.3
	131,669,275	100.0	122,775,046	100.0

Rural people constitute 91.8 per cent of the 35 million without library service. Moreover, these handicapped rural people comprise 57 per cent of the entire rural population.

	1941	Per Cent	1938	Per Cent
Rural without	32,569,745	91.8	38,744,907	91.8
Urban without	2,877,770	8.2	3,433,904	8.2
	35,447,515	100.0	42,178,811	100.0

Out of some 3,000 odd counties, there are still 632 without a single public library within their boundaries. There are 4 cities of over 25,000 population which lack libraries. It can be seen, therefore, that library extension is primarily a rural need.

In 8 states, more than 50 per cent of the people have no public library service. Figured in percentages, the state of North Dakota has the worst record, where 71 per cent of the population has no public libraries. The states having the largest number of individuals, 3,000,000 in each, who live under this handicap are Pennsylvania and Texas. At the other extreme, all the people have library service in the District of Columbia and Massachusetts, while in New Hampshire and Rhode Island, the per cent without is less than one.

### *The American Library Association Sets the Goal*

The effort to equalize these differences in library opportunities has been one of the chief objectives of the American Library Association for many years. With the growth of state library associations and the appointment of state library commissions, much has been accomplished in this endeavor to bring library service and library opportunities to all people alike who live in the United States, whether they live in the city or in the country, and regardless of creed, race, religion or color.

It is encouraging also to know that constructive work has been done of late years in library work with Negroes. Miss Ernestine Rose, just retired, has been for many years the motivating factor in the growth and development of the 135th Street Branch in New York City's Public Library system. Here, the Negroes living in and near Harlem have used their branch of the public library as a community center, bringing *to* the library's program as much as they have taken *from* it. Here they are given an opportunity for self-expression, in art, drama and literature.

In Missouri there is a Negro branch of the Kansas City Public Library, one of the two Negro public library branches in the



A.L.A.

Rural school children crowd up to the bookmobile for their supply which comes every two months

entire state. It houses the finest collection of works about and by Negroes in the state and is entirely manned by Negroes who are professionally trained librarians.

Equality in library opportunity must reach all people in this country. Libraries must go hand in hand with the public schools to educate all of the population, not alone a privileged few. Much has been done, but much more remains to be done. The greatest handicap all along has been the lack of adequate support and this condition will not be corrected until all those who believe in democracy recognize the common right of every American man and woman, boy and girl to share in the benefits of library service.

In the opinion of library leaders, a great deal could be done to increase service to rural people now without it if large unit libraries, county or regional, were more numerous. About 530 counties now have countywide service. There are now between 25 and 30 regional libraries serving people in two or more counties or in a natural trading area. The use of the bookmobile has done much to make these large unit libraries effective. Many bookmobiles are fully equipped libraries on wheels which carry books to village stores, rural schools and outlying farm houses. Librarians report the eagerness with which young and old await the visits of the bookmobile which, like the country doctor, covers its route, come rain or shine.

### *T.V.A. Community Libraries Show the Way*

The Tennessee Valley Authority has developed a large unit library service, including in its organization a group of small community libraries. A former member of the American Library Association staff describes these community libraries as follows:

The TVA community libraries, at the several main construction centers, provide high quality facilities—both in personnel and book stock—to a relatively small population group. The TVA community library affords the equivalent of a village browsing room supervised by an education-minded readers' adviser type of librarian, where the book selection is a choice selection suited to the interests and needs of the special local clientele. It is supplemented by larger book reservoirs, both inside and outside the TVA organization, which put practically unlimited choice in reading matter at the service of each individual student.

Both the physical aspects and the routines of the community libraries reflect the policy of informality which experience had shown to be so essential in adult education. The reading rooms and their furnishings are at once unpretentious and artistic. A man in overalls would feel no hesitancy in entering. On the other hand, the atmosphere of simple beauty and restfulness is

refreshing after a day in the shop or in outdoor construction work. Everything is open, available and inviting. Smoking and a reasonable amount of conversation are permitted. The librarian and his desk are likewise accessible and informal. Most of these community libraries have been located in community buildings or "centers" which also contain the auditorium (for movies, dramatics, lectures, etc.), the post office, recreation rooms, refreshment stands, etc.

The TVA librarians employ the policy of taking reading material to the people rather than waiting for the people to come to the library to get it. They arrange for deposit stations in classrooms, trades shops, country stores, homes, post offices, newspaper offices, mobile medical units, and even in the woods, entrusted to the toolkeepers of crews clearing land. The county agricultural agents have been enlisted as traveling library agents, carrying books in the backs of their cars. Advertisement of the opportunity to learn through reading is broadcast with equal thoroughness. Book displays, posters, etc. are maintained in office lobbies, time offices, cafeterias, lecture halls and community motion picture shows.

High quality personnel has been recognized as a first essential in the TVA library program. The library workers have had to be educator-librarians, able to visualize the distinctly educational challenge of their work and to participate and lead in certain phases of planning for the whole educational program. At the same time, these librarians have had to be capable of a sympathetic understanding of the points of view and educational capacities of their clientele, many of whom, though underprivileged and inexperienced readers, are persons with mature minds and unlimited capacity for growth.

The experience of these community libraries in the Tennessee Valley is opening doors through which we must lead people in other rural communities and is demonstrating methods which will prove valuable to libraries everywhere.

## LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Today thousands of men and women are working together for better legislation, better financial support, and a more even distribution of library services for their own communities. For it is the increased interest and active participation of people outside of libraries which will eventually bring about desired results. Many state *Citizens' Library Movements* have resulted in state appropriations and, by means of this increased support, a state-wide library service. *Friends of the Library* groups have also done much to promote and improve the service which libraries offer.

We invite *you* to join their ranks.

1. Help to organize a *Friends of the Library* group or state citizens' library committee. Consult your state library agency at your state capital. If you have no such agency, you can get information by writing to the American Library Association, 520 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago.
2. Inform yourself of the state book service available, of the state plan for developing local library service, of the state law permitting the establishment of county or regional libraries, of state aid available, or of campaigns to secure state aid in which you may help.
3. Report book needs and interests in library service to the state library agency.
4. Distribute state agency leaflets on library needs and establishment to those with whom you come in contact.
5. Initiate or join in a campaign to establish a county or regional library for your own area.
6. Cooperate with the county or regional librarians after establishment, to make the service fully effective.
7. Support campaigns for state and federal aid and other legislative actions for the development of library service.
8. If you are a rural leader, ask your Congressman to send you a copy of Farmers' Bulletin 1847, entitled "Rural Library Service."



*Robert Gordon, Bd. of Education, Newark*

If we listen, I fancy we might hear this building say to each one of us: "I am the Library. I am brick and mortar and lath and metal. I am shelving and books and equipment and service. Yet, I without YOU am nothing. Unless YOU use me, unless you find joy, pleasure, relaxation, instruction and information within these walls, I am nothing. It is you who must breathe the breath of life into me, must live and feel what the authors are trying to give to you. It is for you to express better human relationships, to become better citizens, to have keener enjoyment and pleasure, to become better workers because you have used this building and its contents, have made use of the shelves here available for you. This day, this age, needs education for one and all, for only by education can we look forward to a better world. I am the Library, but you, you are the one who can make me a living and vital force in this, your community."

(From an address given by the Librarian, Mrs. Elizabeth Kelly, at the dedication of the new building of the Free Library, Valley Stream, New York. Reprinted by permission from the *Library Journal*, October 15, 1942.)

# THE AWAKENING OF WEST ARCADY

BY DWIGHT J. BRADLEY

The little town of West Arcady came to one day and found that its long and pleasant sleep was over. About 20 miles away a big powder plant was preparing to get into production. It was to be a tremendous industry, with a high wire fence to keep out everyone except those who had real business inside.

The people of the little town had been quite pleased when they first learned that the Powder Company was installing one of its largest plants so near and yet so far. The bankers, the storekeepers, the manager of the moving picture theatre, the pool-room and tavern keepers, said to themselves, "Here is a chance to share in some of the war prosperity without having to share too much in the problems created by the war."

When the plant was completed, the regular Powder Company workers commenced to arrive. Someone said that when production reached its peak there would probably be as many as twenty thousand new people to be housed and fed. But even yet the old residents felt no great alarm. The government, they heard, was going to build houses and there was to be a big trailer camp conducted by the Farm Security Administration. But it never occurred to the placid West Arcadians that their town might also be asked to furnish quarters for a part of this new population.

Then the flood came. The town was suddenly full of strangers looking for houses, flats, apartments or rooms. Rents went up, of course, and soon some of the finest of the old homes were occupied by as many as three or four families who paid enough for their two- or three-room suites to reconcile the owners to almost any inconvenience.

The whole life of the community changed. The streets were crowded every evening. Two new and much bigger moving picture theatres were opened. At least a dozen new taverns appeared, adding themselves to the long string of juke joints and honky-tonks that lined the concrete highway clear out to the Plant. Gangs of boys ranged up and down in the late afternoon and evening, shouting and "raising cain." Girls walked mincingly along the new "white way" gazing in at the store windows and keeping an eye out for adventure. Young men hung around the tavern fronts and drug stores, looking for likely "pick ups."

West Arcady became a typical modern industrial town, although the industry that had transformed it was almost 20 miles away.

With the arrival of hundreds of newcomers, a few of the old citizens began to realize that they had an opportunity on their hands as well as a problem. One of the ministers, the Catholic priest, the town's librarian, a young doctor who had only recently started practice and the owner of the leading store who happened to be a Jew, got together in an informal way one day and decided to start something. They had worked together before on some of the town's social problems down across the tracks in the area called Cooper's Valley and knew each other well enough to trust each other's good faith and judgment. The first thing they did, after talking things over, was to go to the Mayor and ask him to set up a local citizens' committee whose job it would be to organize the whole community to deal with the new situation. The Mayor was willing and the committee was formed. When it was fully constituted it took in every important interest in West Arcady,—a public-minded realtor, the chief of police, the superintendent of schools, the local representative of the Farm Bureau, a lawyer, the leading banker, the president of the Woman's Club, the presidents of two luncheon service clubs, a representative of organized labor and, of course, the five who had actually started the enterprise. The minister represented all the Protestant churches with the exception of two whose conservatism made them feel that the movement was outside the province of religion.

The first and simplest thing to be done was to find ways in which to make the newcomers feel more at home. Here the churches thought they might take the lead. A plan of personal calling was drawn up and soon there were almost one hundred people going from door to door, introducing themselves, asking friendly questions and extending an invitation to come to the church services and to the socials that were organized interdenominationally as a way to help people get acquainted. The Woman's Club entered into this plan with surprising enthusiasm, considering that the more conservative members had been at first very cool to the suggestion that they should have anything to do with these questionable "working people" who came from no-one-knew-where. But the enterprise had assumed a truly patriotic aspect by now, so that to participate in it came to be regarded as one's civic duty. Thus friendly good-will and national loyalty combined to unite the community behind a venture in human sympathy and understanding.

The librarian quickly proved herself to be a person of unusual social imagination. "The public library," she said, "is one of the natural community centers." She had always taken this view and so she simply extended her program to include the new people and their particular needs. Besides getting out mimeographed lists of books she thought would be of especial interest, she persuaded one of the ministers to put on a series of book reviews to which the wives of the men in the Powder Plant were given a special invitation. Then she organized a series of evening discussion meetings on war problems and these were surprisingly well attended by men. Thus the library became more than ever a community center, full of children and young people after school.

This movement was already well under way when one member of the committee proposed that they join up with the United States Office of Civilian Defense and constitute themselves a local Defense Council as part of the United States Citizens Service Corps. This proposal was accepted unanimously and soon the Defense Council was vigorously at work in the broader field of volunteer civilian service. A quiet membership campaign was launched and resulted immediately in the registration of more than two hundred citizens, with others rapidly enrolling and receiving their certificates as members of the local Corps. Since then the formerly placid and overly individualistic little town has become a dynamic community and the effect has been astonishing, both psychologically and socially.

The Service Corps has become the heart of a whole community's program. It has taken the lead in organizing and promoting a Salvage Campaign and in emphasizing the way in which the purchase of War Bonds can prevent inflation. It has set up a Family Security Service to lift the morale of workers' families and those disrupted by military service, of which West Arcady has its full share. It has developed a wonderful Child Care Service to relieve the working mothers of the day-care of their children. Under the competent leadership of the young doctor with his progressive ideas and executive ability, it has created a Health and Hospital Service, cooperating with the authorities of the County Hospital about 30 miles away and with its own program of occupational therapy and physiotherapy and all the best scientific techniques to help the people maintain good health in spite of strain and anxiety. It has developed a Nutrition Service, helping in an interesting program of group-feeding in the war production factory and planning conferences to educate housewives in the purchase of food

for a maximum of vitality and health. It has developed, also, a Consumer Program, using the old New England motto,

"Use it up, wear it out,  
Make it do, or do without."

One of its most important jobs has been to help organize the whole housing situation, and this led to an attack on the chronic old housing problems in Cooper's Valley. There was some opposition on the part of a few stubborn obstructionists, but public opinion was all on the side of the Defense Council. Along with this went a Recreation and Youth Service program which had an immediate effect upon the gangs of boys and girls who at first had ranged the streets.

The Council became tremendously interested in the ideas and plans of the librarian, also, and soon a well organized service was being extended to the families in the local trailer camp and even to those in the housing project nearly eight miles outside the town. Then, an Information Service was set up with nationally known speakers who were brought to address big civic meetings in which the other towns circling the Powder Plant on every side participated.

West Arcady is on the march, and most of the old residents are now beginning to step into line. Life has more zest than formerly and a spirit of youth seems to be developing even among the oldsters. As one of the ministers said, "It is a pity that this all has had to come as a result of the war, but no matter how it has come it is a grand thing. Maybe it is one of the ways in which God can make good come out of evil."



# Christmas Comes Once More

Where faith and hope stand waiting,  
And love flings wide the door,  
The long night wakes,  
The glory breaks,  
And Christmas comes once more.\*



**SOCIAL ACTION** is one of the tools we need if we are to help in building a world in which courage and compassion will finally banish fear and hatred from human hearts and minds. Wartime should force no rationing of such sturdy champions of the Christian way of life.



**SOCIAL ACTION** is an Ideal Gift for This Our Second Wartime Christmas—Each month in 1943 it will carry your message of hope to the friends whom you wish to remember with a year's subscription.

We think it will give you added pleasure to know that this year each new Christmas gift will be announced to the recipient with a copy of "Mexico—The Making of a Nation," the F.P.A. Headline Book by Hubert Herring—or, if you prefer, our own "Uniting Today for Tomorrow."



Each SOCIAL ACTION subscription still only \$1.00 a year.

---

\*By Phillips Brooks